

NSC BRIEFING

13 October 1958

MIDDLE EAST

- I. In Lebanon Shihab still after formula which will satisfy moderate Christians and Moslems and bring militants on both sides to drop violent pressure tactics.
 - A. While rank and file weary of struggle, still strong feeling among Moslems that any compromise with pro-Chamoun forces will mean giving up "victory."
 - B. Former rebel leaders like Karame find themselves caught by their own past militant stands; Karame apparently was ready to make way for a neutral caretaker cabinet last week, but was compelled by threats from his supporters to refuse to resign.
 - C. On Christian side, Chamoun is most intransigent element. Chamoun still trying to form significant party, and feels his group must be represented in cabinet.

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2. Christian partisan leader Gemayel, whose group has been leading strike in Beirut, appears more moderately inclined.
- D. Shihab hopes that both sides will exhaust themselves soon, but appears to be losing prestige because of his failure to exert leadership.

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II. In Jordan beginning of British troop evacuation raises question of what may follow.

A. Husayn has agreed to postpone his vacation in Europe until after 15-20 November but this is still a bad time for King to be out country.

B. Rifai cabinet, and the monarchy as a whole, have not gained in prestige or popularity.

1. Return of British troops last August may have marked final break between King and his people.

2. Indicator of general state of mind, [however], was incident in parliament last week when members mistakenly thought they had been given free hand to attack Rifai cabinet. Stormy debate ensued, in which British "occupation" denounced.

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3. [redacted] clandestine Free Jordan radio continuing its attacks, including assaults on President Eisenhower and on Point Four program.

C. Monarchy may be kept afloat for time being by UAR's fear that Israelis would take military action in event Husayn overthrown suddenly.

1. Presence of UN representatives in Amman may also be deterrent factor.

D. Best tactic for UAR-supported nationalists would appear to be to maintain pressure on King to remove Rifai cabinet in favor of weaker government which pro-Nasir elements could infiltrate without giving cause for Israeli or Western ^{alarm} ~~alarm~~.

E. However, Nationalists and Nasir not always rational, and trouble possible at any time after British depart.

TII
IV.

In Tunisia sharp attack on UAR role in Arab League by Bourguiba's representative at Council session last Saturday may lead to early rupture and perhaps to effort by Nasir to oust Bourguiba.

A. Outburst culmination of Bourguiba's long developing antagonism toward Nasir, especially for harboring and supporting Bourguiba's exiled political rival, Salah ben Youssef.

1. Last summer Bourguiba claimed possession of evidence that Cairo had underwritten a ben Youssef plot to assassinate him.

2. Late last month Bourguiba recalled his ambassador from Cairo as gesture of displeasure over ben Youssef's continued presence there.

3. By last week Tunisian president's attitude toward UAR being described as "obsession" by many loyal—but thoughtful and concerned—Tunisians.

B. Moroccan and Iraqi delegates at Council quickly dissociated their governments from Tunisian statement. This appears to leave Tunisia isolated from its Arab neighbors at least for present.

1. These countries--which might possibly have joined with Tunisia in a League bloc independent of UAR influence--now clearly unwilling to take any stand which might antagonize Cairo.
 2. Tunisia's ability to act independently of wishes of Algerian "provisional government" now more narrowly circumscribed than ever.
- C. Cairo radio has already attacked Bourguiba, branding him choice of "imperialists" to check Nasir and drawing comparison with Nuri Said.
- D. Bourguiba's action certain to be exploited by hostile elements at home to president's disadvantage.

- IV. In Iraq, the regime, though asserting its independence of Nasir, is following in Nasir's footsteps by establishing economic and military arrangements with the USSR.**

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B. This past weekend Iraq concluded an agreement re-establishing trade relations with the USSR. These were cut off in 1955.

- 1. This agreement has no aid provisions that we know of; however it does provide for a Soviet trade mission in Baghdad.**

C. Prime Minister Qasim's struggle with his former deputy, Arif, seems ended for the present since Arif has finally left for his post as ambassador to West Germany.

- 1. Despite the show of unity at the airport, where Arif was seen off by Qasim and other officials, the affair leaves scars, and some pro-Arif officers may still be in jail.**

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